

January 20, 2015

## Big Changes to the Farm Work Program

**Q.** *I have traveled to the United States on the farm work program for the past 20 years and I have never needed a visa from the U.S. Embassy. I have heard that starting this year, I will need to come in for a visa. Is this true?*

**A:** Yes, starting in February 2016, you will need to have a visa in your passport before you can travel to the United States on the temporary agricultural worker program (H-2A), which many people call the “farm work” program. This new visa process will be very similar to the H-2B program that Jamaican citizens already use for temporary employment in the United States working in non-agricultural industries such as tourism.

Since 1961, Jamaica has been part of a unique group of countries from which agricultural workers could travel without a visa. Starting this February, however, the United States government is standardizing the process for Jamaica and other Caribbean countries so that they will follow the same procedures that agricultural workers in all other countries follow. This will ensure that these applicants, like other H-2A agricultural workers around the world, are screened properly prior to arrival in the United States. The change will lessen the possibility that persons who pose security risks to the United States improperly gain admission to the United States.

This new requirement in Jamaica will also better ensure that agricultural workers are protected from certain employment- and recruitment-based abuses. Through a consular interview, agricultural workers are informed and made aware of their rights and responsibilities before departing their home countries to engage in temporary agricultural work in the United States.

Let your friends and family members know! Starting this year, the United States farm work program (H-2A) will require workers to come to the U.S. Embassy for a visa interview before they can travel for agricultural work in the United States. Without a valid petition and an approved H-2A visa, farm workers will not be able to travel this season for agricultural work in the United States.

Look out next week for more detailed information on the requirements and process of applying for the H-2A visa in Jamaica in 2016.

*You can find more information about how to travel to the U.S. on our website, [www.kingston.usembassy.gov](http://www.kingston.usembassy.gov) and the website of our authorized service provider at [www.usvisa-info.com](http://www.usvisa-info.com). Keep on top of Embassy news on our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/pages/US-Embassy-Jamaica](https://www.facebook.com/pages/US-Embassy-Jamaica) and by following @USEmbassyJA on Twitter. We also answer general visa questions on our Facebook and Twitter pages*

Remember your appointment time is your arrival time. You do not need to show up earlier than your appointment time.